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➤ Introduction

This handbook has been developed to provide a structure that individuals and teams aspiring to accomplish improvements using the Plan-Do-Check-Act (P-D-C-A) method can use to anchor their efforts to the organization. Many comments made by individuals completing QUEST 2001 process improvement training revolved around the same theme: "Nice idea, but who would ever let me put it to work back at my job?" This handbook is intended to provide potential team leaders and sponsors of improvement initiatives with a structure for pursuing an answer to that question.

The major sections of the handbook are:

- *Improvement Initiative Proposals* which is a guideline for establishing agreement between teams/individuals and process owners on sponsorship of P-D-C-A initiatives;
- *Team Operation Guideline* which provides basic principles that will guide team activities and outlines sponsor and team responsibilities;
- *Improvement Initiative Reviews* which describes a structured method that will be used to provide feedback to the team or individual and exchange of information with the sponsor; and
- *Process Change Requests* which describes how proposals to change a process will be presented and evaluated.

The appendices contain blank forms and examples.

Please give the processes contained in the handbook a try, and let your Group Leader or Division quality support personnel know how things work out.

There is certain to be room for improvement of this handbook. Please don't hesitate to provide your input on this subject to your Group Leader or Division quality support personnel.

Key Responsibilities

	Team Leader (CQI Team)	Sponsor (Process Owner)	Division Office (Quality Support)
Improvement Initiative Proposals	x		
Approval of Proposals		x	
Submission of dispositioned proposals to the Division Office		x	
Team Review Scheduling	x	x	x
Team Review Preparation	x		
Team Reviews			x
Process Change Requests	x		
Process Change Request Approval		x	
Submission of dispositioned process change requests to the Division Office	x		
Point of contact for communications/ status of initiative	x		
Development of P-D-C-A support capabilities			x

➤➤ *Improvement Initiative Proposals*

Purpose:

To provide guidance for proposing, evaluating proposals for, and deciding on sponsorship of P-D-C-A initiatives. The process may be used for proposals by both teams and individuals. A secondary purpose is to provide for collection of information about improvement initiatives and attempts to undertake improvement initiatives.

Considerations:

Please consider the following in planning your initiative:

- scoping of the process is critical to success; many initiatives fail because of an attempt to take on a process that is large or complex; until you are experienced with P-D-C-A, it is advisable to take on a simple process or a small piece of a complex process
- team size and composition are important factors for success; as teams grow to more than six members they become increasingly difficult to manage; teams should be made up of people that work the process day-in day-out, although customer and supplier membership may be appropriate and valuable; team members should have completed P-D-C-A training
- consider the time commitment that will be required of team members; although there is no hard and fast rule, it is not uncommon for participants to spend 3-4 hours per week working on an initiative

Talk to quality support personnel if you would like help in thinking through these or other issues.

Process:

Complete the improvement initiative proposal sheet (example and blank form - see appendix A) to describe the proposed initiative and the proposed team. Submit the proposal sheet to the owner of the process to be improved. The

sponsor is usually the supervisor or manager who has the responsibility for making decisions about changes to the process you would be working on.

The potential sponsor will evaluate your proposal and decide on whether to take on sponsorship based on a variety of factors including:

- the extent to which the stated reason for the project is supported by customer information and/or data
- ability to commit (or, if needed, obtain commitment) to provide the team with the time to work the initiative
- likelihood of positive outcome based on scoping (i.e. the objective is reasonably focused; the team is not trying to "cure world hunger")
- likelihood of positive outcome based on team composition (i.e. the proposed team is not overly large; it contains an appropriate mix of people given the nature of the problem)
- ability to provide necessary support and resources (or obtain support and resources through the Division quality support personnel) to enable positive outcome
- ensuring that the proposed initiative is not redundant with other efforts
- the extent to which the initiative supports achieving business plan objectives

The potential sponsor will document the decision on the proposal sheet and provide feedback to the submitter. Disapproval or deferral of the proposal will be explained on the sheet. A copy of all completed proposal sheets (whether approved, disapproved, or deferred) will be forwarded by the (potential) sponsor to the Division office.

Guidance for Potential Sponsors - Please review the "Considerations:" and "Process:" sections above to understand the criteria that someone approaching you with a proposal expects you to use. If the proposer is inexperienced with P-D-C-A, expect slow going while the team or individual is learning the ropes. Initial improvement initiatives are more about learning to do P-D-C-A than they are about producing critical process

improvements. If you need assistance in evaluating an improvement initiative proposal, please contact another supervisor or manager who has worked with several P-D-C-A teams or contact quality support.

➤ Team Operation Guideline

Purpose:

To provide guidance on effective principles for P-D-C-A team operations. Individuals undertaking improvement initiatives should fulfill the responsibilities associated with team leadership.

Principles of Operation:

- Select an appropriate individual to fulfill the role of team leader
- Agree on the schedule, length, and frequency of meetings
- Establish and gain agreement on:
 - meeting groundrules
 - attendance and participation expectations
 - communicating with absent team members
- Teams will follow the P-D-C-A method and document progress in a Quality Storybook (appendix B)

Role of the sponsor:

- Communicates with the team to stay informed of progress, events, issues, anticipated difficulties, and resource needs
- Informs the team of developments that may affect the initiative

Role of the team leader:

- Contact point for the communication between the team and the rest of the organization and for information about the status of the team
- Calls and facilitates meetings (or obtains facilitator assistance)
- Ensures that the P-D-C-A method is used to guide team activities
- Encourages full participation by team members
- Guides the team to prepare for improvement initiative reviews

Logistics:

- A scribe is often utilized to take and publish team meeting minutes; because this person routinely communicates with the rest of the team, they also often take care of scheduling meeting locations
- A team member should be appointed to keep official team records (including registration sheet; current quality storybook; meeting minutes and agendas; process change request documentation; and other documentation and data related to the project)

➤➤ *Improvement Initiative Reviews*

Purpose:

To conduct a diagnostic review of the progress of improvement initiatives that focuses on understanding and effective utilization of:

- the P-D-C-A cycle
- quality tools and methods
- process performance data
- quality support resources

The emphasis is on the exchange of knowledge between the improvement team (or individual pursuing the initiative) and management, and not on results obtained from the improvement effort. Of primary concern during the review is the importance of substantiating change and progress using data.

A secondary purpose is to provide for collection of information and sharing of lessons learned from improvement initiatives.

Participation:

An important purpose of the review process is the opportunity for the initiative's contribution to improvement to be understood and recognized by those outside of the team. In general, the following individuals should attend the review:

- the members of the improvement team (or individual pursuing the initiative)
- improvement the sponsor of the improvement initiative
- other management interested in the initiative's success
- a member of the quality support resource function

Scheduling of reviews:

Reviews will generally be held on a quarterly cycle and will be scheduled by the quality support team. Upon approval of improvement initiative proposals, the sponsor and team leader should establish a schedule for reviews.

Preparation:

The improvement team (or individual pursuing the initiative) should be prepared to provide an up-to-date quality storybook and pertinent supporting documentation. An example of a reviewer checksheet is attached (appendix C) to give you an idea of what the reviewer is trying to find out about.

Agenda:

A typical review will last from 45 minutes to an hour and will follow the following agenda (times approximate):

- Team presentation (brief and concise) of the quality storybook (15 min.)
- Diagnostic feedback from reviewer (10 min.)
- Team plans for continuing project, questions, concerns (15 min.)
- Management comments (10 min.)

Post-Review Report:

The reviewer is responsible for providing a summary report (example attached - appendix C) to the team leader, sponsor, and Division office within 10 days following the review. The report will summarize areas in which the team has been effective along with recommendations and suggestions for improvement.

➤➤ *Process Change Requests*

Purpose:

To define the method for gaining review and approval of process change requests resulting from P-D-C-A activities and to provide for documentation of outcomes of improvement initiatives. A secondary purpose is to provide for collection and sharing of information about improvements resulting from P-D-C-A initiatives.

Process:

A process change request form (example and blank form attached - appendix D) will be used to document requests for changes to processes resulting from P-D-C-A activities. Complete the form based on the results of tests of theories for improvement developed via performance of P-D-C-A. A completed quality storybook and other documentation supporting the change request should be available in case it is needed to evaluate the process change request.

Submit the process change request package to the sponsor for disposition. The sponsor will evaluate the process change request and decide on whether to approve, reject, or defer action based on a variety of factors including:

- extent to which the data supports the conclusions contained in the process change request
- need for and ability to coordinate approval with other process owners or functions
- availability of resources required to implement the change

The sponsor will document the decision on the process change request form and provide feedback to the submitter. Disapproval or deferral of the proposal will be explained on the form. A copy of all completed process change request forms (whether approved, disapproved, or deferred) will be forwarded by the team leader to the Division office. The sponsor is responsible for directing implementation of approved process changes.

Guidance for Potential Sponsors - Please review the "Process:" section above to understand the criteria that someone approaching you with a process change request expects you to use. If you need assistance in evaluating an improvement initiative proposal, please contact another supervisor or manager who has worked with several P-D-C-A teams or contact quality support.